

English E/III-A Reading Instruction and Practice Activities

Reading Strategy: Making Inferences

Last week we practiced **drawing conclusions** (結論を下す) by using the information in a reading passage to find the deeper, more complex meanings of the passage. In order to draw a conclusion, you must look at the facts within the passage and make a logical conclusion based only on those facts. You could think of it in the following way:

$$a + b + c + d = \text{CONCLUSION}$$

In this sense, A, B, C, and D are pieces of information in the reading passage and your Conclusion is what you think all those pieces of information mean when you put them together. Sometimes this conclusion is included in the reading passage, but quite often it is not and you must make your OWN conclusion.

Today, we are going to practice a similar reading strategy called **making inferences** (推論する). This means that the reader takes all the information from a reading passage and then tries to make a **logical guess** as to what that information MIGHT mean. The keyword is MIGHT. You could think of making inferences in the following way:

$$a + b + c + d \text{ (may or may not)} = \text{INFERENCE}$$

In this example, you still have the same pieces of information (a, b, c, d), but your final idea (Inference) may or may not be true. It is a GUESS - a guess based on the information, but still a guess.

Let's look at last week's example in order to see the differences between conclusions and inferences.

(a) The police are inspecting the damage on two cars. (b) A woman is very embarrassed. (c) A man is very angry.

From these sentences you can **conclude** that there was a traffic accident and that the woman's car probably hit the man's car.

You might also **infer** that:

1. The man is going to be late for work.
2. The woman's husband is going to be very angry when he sees the damage.
3. The police are thinking, "I wish people would drive more carefully."
4. The man and woman will have to contact their car insurance agents.
5. etc., etc., etc.

Now, why do we need to worry about drawing conclusions and making inferences? The first reason is that both of these strategies will help you be a better reader IF you use them. Making inferences is a very good pre reading strategy because it helps you focus on what might happen later in the reading passage. This is especially important when you are reading very long or complicated reading material. Drawing conclusions, on the other hand, is a very useful and necessary post-reading strategy that helps you summarize and understand the material you have just read. If you get in the habit of using both of these strategies WHENEVER you read, your reading comprehension will improve and hopefully you will enjoy reading better.

The second reason for practicing these strategies is in preparation for reading examinations. Many of the most popular English examinations (TOEFL, TOEIC, etc.) have questions that ask you to make inferences and to draw conclusions in the Reading Sections of these tests. In many companies today, all employees must take these types of tests, so it is to your advantage to understand the difference between conclusions and inferences.

Activity 1 Read the following passages and decide whether the sentences are True (T), False (F) or whether they are an Inference (I). When you are finished, compare your answers to the other members of your group.

"Are you going to the Halloween party at school?" asked Janet. "All our friends will be there." "Of course I'm going," answered Diane. "There will be games, contests, food, and even a prize for the scariest costume. I'm going to make the most frightening witch costume that I can."	_____ 1. Diane knew what costume she would wear. _____ 2. The girls wouldn't know anyone at the party. _____ 3. Diane expected to have a wonderful time. _____ 4. Diane wanted to win the prize.
Just after sunrise, Mark and Juan walked onto the golf course. Mark had played golf many times, but it was to be a new experience for Juan. Mark hit the ball far down the course. After Juan hit his ball, Mark said, "Don't worry. It takes practice to play golf well."	_____ 1. Juan taught Mark how to play golf. _____ 2. Mark understood how Juan felt. _____ 3. The boys played golf in the morning. _____ 4. Juan hit the ball badly.

"Is everyone ready to go to the beach?" asked Marsha. "My station wagon is parked outside. Let's hurry! We'll have a wonderful time." All the girls rushed from the house toward Marsha's station wagon. Suddenly Jan said, "I forgot my sunglasses. Wait a minute. I'll be right back."	___ 1. The girls were going to the beach. ___ 2. It was a sunny day. ___ 3. Marsha knows the way to the beach. ___ 4. Jan went back to get her swim suit.
"Why doesn't somebody do something about the lion in our yard?" Mary asked her family. "Oh, be quiet," said Mother and Father. "We're trying to watch television. You know very well there's no lion in the yard. Go back outside and play." No sooner had Mary's parents spoken these words, when an announcer appeared on the television screen with a special message: "We interrupt this program to bring you word that a lion has escaped from the zoo. We repeat: A lion has escaped from the zoo!"	___ 1. Not many lions have ever escaped from the zoo near Mary's house. ___ 2. At first, Mother and Father had told Mary to go back outside and play. ___ 3. Mary had only imagined seeing the lion. ___ 4. Mother and Father believed Mary after they heard the television report.
Patrick was a very popular boy. He was friendly and out-going - qualities people liked. At school, both students and teachers admired him. He was extremely kind to everyone he met, especially to new students who came to his school. Patrick would always go out of his way to make a newcomer feel welcome. No one was surprised, therefore, when Patrick asked Dave to have lunch with him and his friends.	___ 1. Dave is a new student at Patrick's school. ___ 2. Patrick doesn't get along with his teachers. ___ 3. Patrick comes from a good family ___ 4. Patrick has many friends at his school.

Activity 2 Read the following passages and then **WITH YOUR GROUP** make some inferences about the passage.

The boys and girls were choosing teams for a soccer game. Tom and Ann were captains. They flipped a coin to see who would choose first, and Tom won. He picked Linda as the first player for his team. "Just my luck," complained Ann. "Tom picked Linda first. Oh well, maybe tomorrow I'll get to choose first."	From this passage you can infer that: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
"Something's all wrong," muttered Rachel as she opened her eyes to the bright morning sun shining through her bedroom window. "The sun shouldn't be up. It's the middle of winter, and my electric alarm clock says it's 6:30 a.m. It should still be dark outside." Rachel checked her clock. The numbers were lit and they changed to 6:31 as she watched. The clock was definitely working. From the street, however, she heard the sound of her school bus which usually picks her up at 8:10 a.m.	From this passage you can infer that: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Activity 3 Reading Aloud With your group, read today's articles *out loud*. Take turns reading the articles sentence by sentence. Try to read each sentence from start to finish as smoothly as possible. Don't read like a robot and don't use KATAKANA ENGLISH.

Activity 4 With your group, use these questions to help you make inferences about today's article.

1. What kind of married life will John and Huiling have?

2. What kind of relationship will John have with his mother-in-law?

3. What problems will John have living and working in Taiwan?

4. How are foreigners treated in Taiwan?

Activity 5 Group Discussion

For the time remaining, discuss the following questions with your group. I expect everyone to participate by stating their opinions on each question, showing agreement or disagreement with your classmates opinions, and asking questions whenever you feel necessary. All discussions, must be in ENGLISH! If you get stuck and can't say what is in on your mind, ask your classmates or me for help.

1. In Japan, is it the custom to give a gift when someone gets married? To whom/From whom is the gift given? What is given?
2. How do weddings in Japan differ from weddings in Taiwan?
3. What kind of wedding do you want to have? Explain it to your group.
4. If a foreigner is invited to a Japanese wedding, what do they need to know to be a good guest?
5. What kind of gifts would you like to get on your wedding?
6. Who would be your dream groom/bride?
7. (your question) _____ ?
8. (your question) _____ ?

Activity 7 Discussion Summary

Take a few minutes and think about what you and your group mates discussed in class. Then, write a summary of your discussion. Please use all the space available.

Score: _____ /10
